

An Affectionate

ADDRESS

TO

PRISONERS

FOR

DEBT;

WITH

MEDITATIONS

AND

PRAYERS

Adapted to their unhappy Circum-
stances.

L O N D O N:

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M DCC XLII.

*The Prisoners who can Read, should
assist those who cannot : This is
charity to their Neighbour's
soul.*

*It is not expected that all these Pray-
ers should be used at once, but at
different times ; according to the
bodily strength and spiritual cir-
cumstances of the Prisoner.*



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An Affectionate

A D D R E S S

T O

Prisoners for DEBT.

CHAP. I.

*Containing advice or counsel to those
who are under confinement in prison
for Debt.*

THE case of poor prisoners for
Debt, being very lamentable
and uncomfortable, with relation to
their bodies, but more with relation
to their most precious souls ; I think

it a good piece of charity to direct them how, in their most melancholy circumstances, they may, however, set their souls safe, and also provide for their bodily straits; making them as easy and advantageous to them, yea, and I add really as safe too, as their case will admit of. And because these persons are of two sorts, what I have to say shall be contained under two generals. *1st*, To such as are brought into this condition, without any particular apparent cause or fault of their own. And, *2dly*, to such as have brought this affliction and misery upon themselves, by their own default.

I. Then, to those of you, who are under confinement for Debt, and that not through any evident and particular fault of your own.

Perhaps your poverty was brought upon you by the meer providence of God, under whose sovereign disposal all our concerns are: It may

may be, in a fair and prudent way of trading, you have met with unexpected losses by shipwrack, or have had your goods and substance consumed by fire, or perhaps through the falshood or wickedness of those you have trusted in a way of trade, or otherwise, you have suffered insupportable losses, or have been imposed upon, and abused in the wares you traded in, and at last have fallen into the hands of merciless creditors, who perhaps have taken you as it were by the throat, for some small matter you owe them. If this indeed be your case, it is very compassionate. A few things I have to exhort you unto :

1st, Consider or examine how you came by those goods, which you are now deprived of. And whether your sin and fault in getting them, has not brought this poverty and affliction upon you, though the particular cause, as I hinted, is not plain, and evidently your fault. Has not

some unrighteous gain, which you loved and procured, brought a blast upon all that you once did possess? Was not the employment you followed an unlawful calling? If so, is it to be wondred at if you meet with a blast and curse in the way, and upon the wages of unrighteousness! If your callings were lawful, yet were they managed lawfully? Perhaps some lying or injustice, or overreaching in your trade, or some falshood in your contracts and bargains, about buying and selling, has brought a curse upon all you had, Or else enquire whether you have not been false to some trust, which has been reposed in you by those that are living, or by those that are dead.

2dly, Examine whether there be not yet some other sin and fault of yours, that God now reckons with you for, and thus punishes you. Perhaps you were wholly taken up once with this world, and your hearts

hearts set upon it, so as to forget God, and neglect his worship, and pretend you had no leisure for the minding your main interest and concernment; and now God has effectually taught you the vanity of these things. Have you not lived in some stated course of sin, which conscience now brings to your remembrance, by reason of your affliction? Have you not been greedy of excessive gain by extortion, or oppressing the poor? Have you not formerly been merciless to, and severe with some debtor, or uncharitable towards those that injured you?

3dly, Be duly humbled, and truly penitent for your sins, when you have thus searched them out. This is so plain and needful a direction, I need not insist much upon it: A sense of sin is necessary in order to repentance; and it is no further desirable, than as it is conducing thereunto, as it is productive of *that sorrow, which worketh repentance unto*

A. 4. life,

life, which is never to be repented of.
 Take up therefore sincere purposes and resolutions, that by the help of God, you will for the future evidence your abhorrence of these, and all other sins, by forsaking of them, and turning unto God, with hearty endeavours after better obedience unto all God's commandments.

4thly, Labour to endure the present affliction you are under, with a christian temper of mind. Quietly submitting yourselves unto God, and committing all your ways and concerns unto him; endeavouring after that contentment which the gospel requires in every condition; patiently waiting for such an issue out of your troubles, in which God shall be glorified, and you receive much advantage; waiting with patience till God may move your creditors to have pity upon you, being satisfied you have dealt faithfully with them, not daring, by rigid exacting what cannot be had, to take, as it were, their

their fellow-servants by the throat, lest their heavenly Father should deal so with them. In the mean time, you must heartily forgive either the injury or severity you have received, or do receive from your creditors, or any others. How can you expect mercy from God or men, if you cannot forgive those who injure you? Be thankful to God for any helps or favours you meet with from God or man, under your present calamities, not forgetting past mercies. Bless God that your case is not so deplorable, as is theirs who, it may be, are in the same prison with you for their crimes, in order to yet greater punishment from God and man too. Greatly rejoice in this, if you have any good ground to hope, that you shall for ever be delivered from the prison of hell. Improve the benefit you may reap by retirement from the world, to the best ends and purposes. Remember for your comfort, that if you do in-

deed belong to God, he will own you, and be present with you in prison, even as he was with *Joseph*; and will not cast off his people when men catch them up: and has made it the duty of others to own them, and visit them too: And that under the closest confinement, you have leave and liberty *come boldly to the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*, Heb. iv. 16.

Secondly, I propounded to speak something to those of you, that have brought this affliction and misery upon yourselves, by your own default.

This perhaps you have done some of these ways following, the guilt or sin of so doing, you should be deeply sensible of, as well as of your folly herein.

1st, Perhaps you have brought your poverty upon yourselves by your own sin and folly. By such methods as these: Great negligence and carelessness in your worldly employ-

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ployments ; or by riotous and luxurious living, spending more upon diet, or clothing, or diversions, than your trade or income would allow ; perhaps by gaming and debaucheries, you have wasted your own estates, and part of other mens too : Or else you have perhaps impoverished yourselves, by undue grasping at more business than you could manage, or by prosecuting of vain schemes and projects, with too eager a desire of getting an abundance, or by rash adventuring too far, and faultily engaging for other men. By some such methods as these, it may be you have brought poverty upon yourselves. And,

2dly, Perhaps you have by some other evil practices provoked your creditors to use great severity towards you, who otherwise would have shewn mercy and kindness.

For instance : Did you borrow (as the wicked do) perhaps with no design to repay, or when you knew there

there was little or no probability you should be able to pay ? Perhaps you have borrowed money, or taken up goods immediately before you absconded, and with design have thrown yourselves into prison, or designed elsewhere to live at ease, and in luxury, upon other mens estates, or whilst perhaps your creditors greatly want what you have unjustly taken away, or detained from them. Perhaps your creditors are incensed, because you have wickedly given to your children their estates in marriage, to make them great ; or made over what you have to some others in trust for you, in order to defraud them. Perhaps you have confessed fraudulent judgments, or made unjust compositions, or used some other wicked arts to cheat your creditors. Have you not grievously imposed upon some credulous friend, in borrowing of money, or perhaps oppressed some poor families, or widows and orphans, in depriving them

of

of all their living? Perhaps you used many flatteries in borrowing of money, or have been guilty of dishonesty in your trading, or unfaithfulness in contract and promises; and at last have railed at, and abused your creditors, and thus have highly incensed them.

These particulars being duly considered by you, so far as in any of them you are guilty, let me call upon you to deep humiliation and repentance; otherwise let me tell you plainly, and I beg you to believe me, your present calamities are but the beginning of sorrows. It is but just with God and man, that you be kept under confinement here, and that you are in great danger of a far worse confinement, even in the prison of hell for ever. Some of the crimes abovementioned are iniquities to be punished by an earthly judge; and though human laws may be defective herein, yet God will not suffer these things to escape his righteous

teous judgment : Were not you yourselves guilty, you would readily agree to this, that some of these crimes are worse than robbing on the high-way. But besides this earnest exhortation to repentance, (which for wrongs and acts of injustice towards men, cannot be sincere, without making restitution to the utmost of your power) two things further, I would say, referring you also to what may be of use to you under the directions already given to the other sort of Debtors.

I. Acknowledge not only the justice of God, but of your creditors also, in your confinement, and carry it humbly towards both. You must be unaccountably blind, if you see not the justice of God herein ; and hard, if you are not humbled under his hand ; and also, however severe your creditors may seem to be, yet they are not unjust, especially considering the injuries and provocations they have received from you.

you. And this ought humbly to be acknowledged by you, and is not only your duty, but the most prudent course you can take to incline them to pity and shew mercy; which you may hope for the rather, if you will as you ought,

2. Strip yourselves of all you have, and cast yourselves naked on the providence of God, and compassion of your creditors. Discover fully therefore the whole of your estate, and all your effects; dare not to detain any thing fraudulently, but remember the advice of the prophet, to the widow in distress, the creditors of whose husband came upon her, *2 Kings iv. 7. Go sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children upon the rest.* If the widow was bound to do thus, with what was given her providentially after her husband's decease, much more ought you to do thus with what you have reserved, and is indeed none of your own. If you should

should say, the widow had some oil yet left after her debts were paid, but you have not sufficient to pay what you owe. I answer, Let all go to satisfy your creditors as far as you are able ; this is the best way to hope and expect mercy in your present circumstances : And when you do thus shew, that like this woman *you fear God*, and entertain sincere and honest intentions, (if you are ever able) to make full restitution and payment ; you have the more reason to hope for a future blessing from divine providence upon your honest industry, if ever you should be released from your present confinement, where otherwise you are like to remain, without any compassion from God or man, to reap with shame and sorrow the fruits and effects of your own evil doings.

Be sure to deal candidly and openly with your creditors. If you cannot fully satisfy them, lay your condition

dition truly before them, and shew yourself disposed to do right to all as far as you can. Do not pretend ways of raising money for them, which are not true ; nor promise payments which you cannot perform. It is your duty to be sincere and plain with them, and plain-dealing may mollify and engage them ; but it will be your sin, and may double their resentment, if you abuse and delude their expectation.

And let them be first served out of your estate, so far as it will go ; unless in compassion to your needs, they are willing to allow you some part of it. But think not first of saving maintenance (whether they will allow of it or no) for yourself or for your family, and then of letting them take what remains. For your duty is first to be just to all men, and not live yourself, nor maintain your dependants, upon other mens goods kept from them against their wills ; which is to live upon withholding

Holding right, and perverting justice.

Much less think of forcing them to abatements, and scanty compositions, to reserve and raise a good estate for yourself, or for your heirs, out of their purses. Nor choose to endure the tediousness and hardships of a jail for your life, to supersede all legal remedy against your heir, for your debts, which he cannot be sued for a second time, after you have died a prisoner for them. For this is paying very dear for doing wrong, and denying men their own; and is certainly the way to carry off a very unrighteous and guilty conscience with you, and to leave the curse of ill reserved goods, and of unpaid debts, to your heirs who survive you.

And seek not to tricks, or any dishonest fetches and misuse of the law, to set aside debts, or put them off and postpone them, instead of paying them. Nor spend any of your money, in defrauding, or hindring

dring your creditors of their just right, which is all little enough, it may be too little, towards the honest satisfaction of it.

And if by your insolvency any of your creditors are brought against their wills to abate part, rather than lose all, look on that part as respited, not remitted, and pay it afterwards (if God enable you) in the sum itself, or (if you cannot do that) be studious to make it up in good offices and grateful services; and for the rest, have recourse to God by prayers in their behalf. And what after-recompences you make them, do the same with good-will, chearfully and diligently; and thank them heartily for their patience and kindness, in being content to wait it so long as they have done; when you do at last pay them the sum itself, or when you cannot do that, in accepting your services in lieu thereof.

And having first taken this upright care of your creditors, and of their payments,

payments, then look to yourself, and provide the best you can for your own maintenance. If you have any thing of your own left, after your creditors are satisfied, live frugally and thankfully upon it. If you have not, then you are called to get your livelihood still as you need it, and in the way of honest industry look up to God to *give you day by day your daily bread*. If he has enabled you to seek this, by earning it for yourself in any lawful labour or business, look on that as the best way, and ply it with diligence and contentedness. But if through disability, or the numerousness of your family, or otherwise, you need to be helped out by gifts of charity, humble yourself to your state, and represent your necessities modestly, and receive an alms with thankfulness. First represent your wants to your near relations, who are more especially bound to relieve the needs of *their own house*, 1 Tim. v. 4, 8. and then

then to any other charitable persons, as your case requires.

And whether you live by alms or by taking pains, bear always in your mind, that you are called to act the part, and discharge the duties, of a poor estate: and let it be your daily study, to bring your mind to it, and to think only of having such accommodations as are fit for a poor man; not such as you had whilst you were in a wealthier condition.

C H A P. II.

Containing some considerations and directions in order to prevent being infected and corrupted by the evil practices and examples of wicked men; of such especially, as are too commonly found in the prisons of this kingdom.

BY too frequent sad experience it is evident, that *Evil communication*

nication corrupts good manners, or dispositions, and makes those which are already vicious yet more so : And whosoever believes and considers what the wise man tells us, Prov. xiii. 20. That a companion of fools shall be destroyed, will certainly think it highly concerns him to take care of his company : And he who at any time is unavoidably engaged in or confined to the converse and society of wicked men, where he cannot avoid seeing and hearing from day to day their unlawful deeds and wicked words, and at the same time his righteous soul is not vexed with their filthy conversation, is in great danger of being infected and greatly polluted. And because it is too plainly evident, that the prisons in this nation are generally filled with the worst of men, who are guilty of most infectious sins, and that some persons, who when they were first committed, were not so ill disposed as some others are, have yet

yet been afterwards carried away into the most sinful courses, by the inundation of all manner of vice visibly practised in such places, and have contracted ill habits during their confinement in such polluted company ; I therefore add this chapter to the foregoing, which may (if God please) be of use to those who are imprisoned upon any account, or are released from their confinement ; and shall mention such things as may make it of more general use, to warn and preserve others also from the danger of evil examples.

In order to which end, I will observe this method.

I. I will shew what danger there is of being induced to follow ill examples.

II. I will give a particular warning not to learn or imitate the practice of some sins, too commonly and visibly committed by those who are in prison.

III. I

III. I will propound some general directions and helps, in order to prevent being corrupted by evil examples.

I. I propound to shew what danger there is of being induced to follow ill examples.

And he must be a stranger to human nature, and unacquainted with what is evident by constant experience, who knows not what a mighty force the examples of others have upon us; which has verified that saying, that "The world is governed more by example than by precept." Especially, we are apt to imitate the example of the multitude, or the generality of those we live amongst or converse with; and more especially, of those that are our constant companions, and intimate associates; and above all, we are most apt to imitate others in sin and folly, in vice and wickedness. This is partly owing to our corrupt hearts:

He

He must be a stranger to the word of God, and to his own soul, who is not sensible of an inward natural averfeness to what is good, and strong propensity and inclination to that which is evil, and what need therefore he stands in of the curbs and restraints of divine grace and providence, as well as the renovation of his soul by the holy Spirit.

Again, this danger is owing in part to the urgent solicitations and temptations of the devil, who will not fail to take the advantage given him by the examples of others, to stir up our natural corruptions. And he will instigate wicked companions actually to solicit and urge others, to do as they do ; and how forcible will these temptations be, when a man who thinks of resisting them, shall thereby be scorned as being singular, and ridiculed more than a foreigner in a strange habit, or an outlandish or antiquated garb : When he shall be tempted to think of im-

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punity, by reason of the multitude he engages with, or that what he does is innocent, because so many do so.

Again, If persons delightfully choose wicked men for their intimate friends or companions, and so run themselves into temptation; or if when they are forced to be in their company, they do not stand upon their guard, and *watch and pray that they enter not into temptation*, they justly provoke God to withhold his grace, to permit Satan to tempt them, and give them over into his hands, or unto their own hearts lusts: And should this be the case of any, what will hinder them from *committing all manner of sin with greediness, and drinking in iniquity like water?*

Yet further, these persons are in greatest danger, who are not only in the company of those who are lost to all sense of shame, or honour, or any sort of goodness; but are themselves,

selves, perhaps, very much strangers to these things, and this (it is to be feared) is too commonly the case of those, who are, or have been confined in prison; therefore of all men they are in most danger.

Thus you see for what reasons men are most likely to imitate sinful examples, or wicked practices. At first perhaps you may be startled and shy at the ugly countenance of some new vice you never saw nor heard of before, till afterwards your horror wears away by frequency and familiarity, you grow less afraid or offended with the enormity of others; and at length take pleasure in their unrighteousness, and then learn to speak their language; and so conscience by degrees grows hard, till at last you are ripened for the worst of villanies, and become as bad as the worst.

Certainly it is as hard to preserve yourselves pure and clean in wicked company, as it is for a traveller to

avoid defilement in a dirty road, where there are multitudes of passengers, yea, a multitude of dirty dogs, that are often leaping and fawning upon him : Or, as it is for a person to preserve a sound and healthy constitution in a place and air filled with infection, and where all about him have plague-sores always open and running. Few or none, it is likely, in many prisons, can keep themselves from being infested with little vermine, that they catch from others there ; and I fear it is as difficult, if not more so, to avoid being infected and infested with worse plagues than these. This leads me to the

II. General propounded, *viz.* to give a particular warning, not to learn or imitate the practice of some sins, too commonly and visibly committed by those that are in prison.

These I fear are so many, that to mention them all with any enlargement under each particular, would
swell

swell this chapter beyond the bulk of the whole book: And many of them are such as perhaps none can describe but such as have been trained up in debauchery and villany; and some of them of such a nature, that they are not fit to be mentioned, lest the very warning and caution against them should teach, if not excite some to the commission of them; therefore this general hint at such sort of sins shall suffice; and I shall speak particularly, though briefly, of those sins that may be found indeed among wicked men who are not under confinement, though perhaps no where in such a heighth, or after such an aggravated manner, as by some of them.

In the name of God then I warn you, as you value his favour, or hope for his mercy, or tender the welfare of your immortal souls, that you do not imitate the examples (which too too much abound) of any persons whatsoever in such things as these.

1st, *A contempt of God's worship.*
 The light of nature teaches us, that the God who made us, and does maintain us, should be constantly served and worshipped by us : And we that have the invaluable benefit of his revealed will, declared in his Word, hear the most plain and positive commands and directions for his worship : To neglect therefore, much more to contemn the worship of God, must be a grievous crime, and is indeed to forsake God, and provoke him to abandon us. This sin not only those may be guilty of who are at large, but is committed by such also as are under confinement, who refuse to join with others in the worship of God, as they may sometimes have opportunity, and never read his word, or pray to him in secret and by themselves.

2dly, Take heed lest you go yet further in imitating of those who scoff and jeer at all religion and things sacred ; who deride the worship

ship of God, as a thing worse than vain and needless; and those that fear God, as persons as bad or worse than fools. This argues the very height of profaneness, and yet is often found amongst wicked men, who with impudence, under the notion of wit, are dangerous persons for the infecting of others: Always abhor a profane jest or speech against God or his word, or his worshippers, remembering ere long you must stand before God's judgment-seat, and be judged by his word, and must be in the company of his worshippers, or else confined with devils, and damned spirits in eternal torments.

3dly, Take heed of learning or imitating of the horrid oaths, and blasphemies, and curses which you may hear. On this account some sinners seem to equal the devils and damned spirits in hell, who blaspheme God, because of their torments; yea, in some respects to out-

do them; for rage and despair makes them blaspheme, whereas sinners on earth have space for repentance: Those miserable creatures, had they any ground of hope, would not, like many on earth, call upon God to damn them or others: The devils themselves have expressed some fear of being yet further tormented, but how many wicked men dare almighty vengeance to punish them, and set their mouths against heaven in such a manner as is not fit to be mentioned, though by way of reproof; nor will it excuse them to say, they are provoked to a passion, or are but in jest, when they thus sling about arrows and death; much less will it avail them to say they are habituated or accustomed so to do; this will stand them in no more stead, than if a malefactor should plead in excuse for his theft, that he has been accustomed to robbery, and cannot live without stealing.

4thly,

4thly, Take heed of imitating others in their obscene and lewd discourse: This vice is too common, and as it is most pernicious to the speaker, so it is most infectious to the hearer. To insist on this subject, would be as the dissecting of putrid bodies, that may cast pestilential fumes; I only therefore say further, that such discourse argues the speaker to be degenerated into the rank of the most libidinous animals, such as a goat or a boar, and tends to corrupt their company; and if they design such discourse for entertainment or pleasure, it is to affront their hearers, as supposing their fancies and inclinations to be most base and brutish. Other sins of the tongue might be mentioned, and warnings given against them; for the restraints of a prison will not tame that unruly member, which is so often *full of deadly poison, and set on fire of hell*, even as to infect and consume those that are round about.

Take heed of lying, which is so contrary to the God of truth; of false accusation or defaming of your neighbour; of proud swelling words of vanity, or boasting and glorying even in your shame; of unrighteous and unreasonable complaining against God or man.

5thly, Take heed of learning or imitating others in acts of lewdness and uncleanness: There are some sorts of this sin, especially, which are not fit to be named, and it is a shame to speak of such things as are done of some in secret, and perhaps sometimes impudently before others also. If filthy talk be very dangerous, lewd actions are yet more so; and if fornication and adultery are sins God has threatned with eternal burnings, what punishment will be inflicted upon some (nameless) unnatural lusts and abominations? For this sin fire and brimstone was rained upon *Sodom*, as an emblem of that unquenchable fire such sinners will

will be eternally tormented in ; and therefore do I most earnestly warn you in this respect, as also because such sins are most particularly of an infecting nature.

6thly, Beware also of drunkenness ; which is ordinarily committed in company, and usually a love of wicked company leads men thereto, tho' at the same time it unfits a man for any society with reasonable creatures. This sin debases the human nature, and makes him that is guilty of it, for a time, as void of reason as a brute, and to be like a filthy swine, in excessive swallowing of its swill, or a dog in his nasty vomit. This will unfit you for all duties to God, or your neighbours, or yourselves, and expose you to the doing or suffering of the greatest evils, and is likely to bring judgments upon you in body and soul, and swift destruction unawares.

7thly, Take heed lest you learn to imitate old offenders in the vile arts
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of cheating and robbery, or any sort of injustice. How many criminals, who were but novices in the arts of roguery, when first committed to prison, have learned this accursed trade to perfection from the company they have met with there, which afterwards they practise to the damage of the publick, and their own personal ruin. And how many Debtors also, in their confinement, have learned new ways and methods of cheating and deceit, which they practise during their confinement, or when they obtain their liberty? What these methods of villany are, which are to be learned in such places, if I knew (as I do not) it were not fit for me to mention them; but it is highly your interest and duty, who cannot but know what they are, to resolve, by God's grace, against them; and as you have opportunity, to prevent the acting of them by others; and if they are

com-

committed, to assist the magistrate in the discovery of them.

8thly, Take heed of imitating others in their idleness, luxury, and love of sensual pleasures. Flesh-pleasing is the master sin, which ruins thousands, and is hard to be conquered: This part of self-denial is difficult, and yet without it there will be no virtuous inclinations or actions. I have often thought it is a pity that some criminals especially, are not obliged to hard labour, and that others have not more opportunity and encouragement given them to be industrious. This contributes greatly towards the abounding of vice, when persons indulge idleness and sloth, or give themselves over to a love of pleasure, and know not how to spend their time without sports, or games, or some sensual pleasures and pastimes. Such a temper as this must needs be injurious to private families, and to the publick: this will put men upon the
most

most wicked and dangerous methods to get money, to feed them and their lusts; and the associating with idle and voluptuous persons, will make you like them in this and other respects also, unless great care and diligence be used to prevent the bad influence of their evil examples.

III. I proceed to the last general propounded, which is to give some directions and helps, in order to prevent being corrupted by evil examples. And,

1st, *Consider that the practice of others ought not to be your rule, nor will it justify you in an evil thing.* The will of God is our rule eminently above and exclusively of all other things. And we should always enquire rather what God saith we must do, or not do, than what men say or do. I need not insist long on the proof of what is here asserted, because it is so very plain: For if the practice of others would justify

justify an evil action, all distinction or difference between right and wrong, good and evil, would be done away, and there would then hardly be any crime but what would be justifiable: Therefore let me desire this may be duly considered, that it will not justify you in an evil action, because some *great* men may set you an example, for great men are not always good men; nor yet will it justify you, that *some* good men have done that evil you are tempted to: For many things are recorded in holy scripture concerning them, for our admonition, and not for our imitation. Nor yet will it justify you, that the most men you converse with do as you do; because we *must not follow a multitude to do evil*; and our Saviour has told us whither the *broad way*, in which multitudes do walk, *leadeth, even to destruction.*

2dly, Never dream of impunity, because there are multitudes of sinners

ners as bad as yourselves. For God has threatned to *turn all the wicked into hell, yea, all the nations that forget God*, Psal. ix. 17. And has declared, that although *the wicked join hand in hand, they shall not prosper*. Sinners are apt to harden themselves in their iniquity, and fancy they shall escape punishment, at least from man, because of their numbers, or at least that some of them may escape, perhaps the majority, when only some few, the ringleaders, it may be, or those who set the evil example, are punished. But however it may be amongst men, sometimes as to this matter, it is otherwise with God, against whom none can harden themselves and prosper, nor can the greatest number withstand almighty vengeance ; and tho' it is true, the mercies of God are greater than the mercies of men ; yet withal, his justice is more severe and inexorable, and his truth most inflexible, and he stands in no need
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of us, as man may do ; nor can he suffer any detriment by our ruin ; but on the contrary, will glorify his justice and power in the final destruction of obstinate offenders, and has given us examples of the ruin of multitudes, to deter us from sin, and make us abandon such a vain conceit as that is, which I am warning you against. Witness the drowning of the old world, in which all perished but eight persons ; the destruction of *Sodom*, and the cities round about, from which only three persons escaped ; with the ruin of *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, the ringleaders, and all their company.

3dly, Know this, that the most delightful companions you have in sin now, will be some of your greatest tormentors hereafter, if they and you should both be cast into hell together. The Devil is first a tempter, and then a tormentor, and such are his instruments, such will your wicked companions be. On this account

account it is generally thought our Saviour represents the rich man in hell, petitioning that his five brethren might be warned, lest they should come into that place of torment he was in : because they would by their company add new and greater torment unto him. How grievous will it be, when the whore and her master shall together be cast into a *bed of fire*, and the drunkards made together in company to drink the *cup of God's wrath*? How sad will the remembrance of former revelings then be? And how dreadful the mutual accusations, and rage of these miserable wretches be for ever? It is excess of madness to go to hell for company, when the company will be one great part of the misery of that place for ever.

4thly, Maintain a strict and constant guard or watchfulness, whilst in the midst of such temptations as you will meet with in evil company. To enforce this direction, consider
what

what has been said already of the danger there is of being induced to follow evil examples. This is with you an *hour of temptation*, and therefore it behoves you especially to *watch*, to stand upon your guard, as knowing the enemy is nigh at hand. Watch especially against the first motions of corruption in the heart, and the least inclinations to sin, and crush the cockatrice in the egg; watch your senses, with *Job* make a *covenant with your eyes*, and all your senses and bodily appetites; watch yet more especially against those sins, that others practise, and are most suitable to your natural temper and constitution, or present condition.

5thly, Fortify your souls with proper thoughts and considerations, for your security in this time of danger. Even as those who breathe in an infectious air, use to have some antidotes, or preservatives; or as when a city or garrison is likely to be besieged, and the enemy makes his approaches,

proaches, a wise commander will see that the fort be well manned, and provided. Take now the *shield of faith*, and learn you to use the *sword of the Spirit*, which is the Word of God. Remember the eye of God is always upon you, as a witness of your actions, who will be the judge of your persons: And if you are tempted by others to uncleanness, as *Joseph* was by his mistress, or to any other sin, say as he did, *How shall I do this great evil, and sin against God, who looks on?* Think often upon death and judgment, as certain and near; think on heaven and hell, as real and eternal; labour to maintain a constant fear of God in your soul, who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell for ever; and to know more of the goodness of God, as that which is too excellent to be forfeited, for the gratifying a base lust, or pleasing of any man upon earth. Let this thought also tend to fortify your souls against temptations
from

from wicked companions, that they do the work of the devil, the very work he doth, and puts them upon doing; and dare no more to comply, than you would with a temptation of the devil, should he himself appear and solicit you in person: An appearance of the devil would frighten you, and therefore he does his work by wicked men his agents, whilst at present he keeps out of sight.

6thly, Evidence your displeasure against, and dare to reprove those sins you see others commit. This will be a means at once to preserve your innocence, and may possibly tend to reclaim others: This however is your duty, as you would not share in the guilt of that sin you know your neighbour commits, tho' you do not imitate him: This will be a good method to prevent his soliciting you to do that which he finds you are already grieved at, and perhaps may at least make him shy of

of committing some sins you reprove him for. Thus you will imitate the penitent malefactor, who was crucified with our Saviour, if you reprove your companions for their wickedness, and call upon them *to fear God*. Nay, herein you will be like to righteous *Lot*, who only with his two daughters escaped the flames that consumed *Sodom*: nay, let me add further, herein you will imitate our blessed Saviour himself, who conversed with publicans and sinners, as a physician with the sick, that he might call them to repentance. Dare to reprove those that dare to defy their Maker. Dare to be counted an enemy, to shew yourself a true friend. Dare to be zealous for God, and then you may more comfortably hope that he will be favourable unto you.

7thly, Fail not to pray constantly for the grace of God, to keep you from the snares and temptations of the

the devil, and all wicked instruments whatsoever. Thus the apostle directs us to do ; after he had exhorted us *to take the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand,* Eph. vi. 13. In which words you see how plainly he intimates our danger, and the difficulty of withstanding the devil's temptations. And from what has been said already, it appears, that you ought particularly to consider this ; I say, the apostle exhorts us, *ver. 18. To pray always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit ; and to watch thereunto with all perseverance.* Begin every day with serious earnest prayer to God, and be in his fear all the day long. Set the Lord always before you, walk as in his sight, and be careful, as much as possible, to do nothing now that will cause sad reflections in a dying hour, and turn to a sad account in the day of judgment. Com-
mit

mit yourself, by constant fervent believing Prayer to the conduct and keeping of divine grace ; and in so doing, you may hope to be kept from every evil word and work unto the heavenly kingdom.

PRAYER is the necessary duty of every one, in every condition of life, especially of the afflicted, and in particular of such for whose benefit the foregoing lines were written : Yet as most men need frequent and earnest exhortations to the practice of this duty, because of their backwardness hereto ; so multitudes stand in need of assistance herein, because of their inability, through ignorance, or for want of due consideration, endeavour and accustoming themselves thereto. I therefore add the following Prayers, as proper to direct those whose case they are suitable to, how to order their requests before God, and also to be used by them, or read
humbly

humbly and devoutly before God, with this needful caution, that they always remember, if the mind and heart do not with understanding and seriousness, and suitable affections, join with the words they read, or use themselves, or may be used by others praying with them and for them, all they do of this kind is trifling with God, and mocking of him, and not performing any acceptable worship to him, who is a Spirit, and seeketh such to worship him, as do it in spirit and truth.

C

PRAY.

P R A Y E R S

F O R

Prisoners for DEBT.

Scriptures to be Read by Debtors.

Psal cxlii. *Lev.* xix. ver. 11, to 16.
Luke xii. ver. 22, to 32. *Psal*
cxxx. *Deut.* xxiv. ver. 10, to 16.
Chap. xv. ver. 7, to 12.

THE Lord executeth judgment
for the oppressed, the Lord
looseth the prisoners. *Psal.* cxlvi. 7.
I

I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.

Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope. *Zeek. ix. 11, 12.*

I give thee for a covenant to the people, that thou mayst say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. *Isa. xlix. 8, 9.*

The Lord heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners. *Psal. lxix. 33.*

He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

Such as sit in darkness, and the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron.

Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High;

Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell, and there was none to help.

Then they cried unto the Lord in their

their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses.

He brought them out of darknes, and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. *Psal. cvii. 9, to ver. 14.*

THE wicked borroweth, and payeth not again. *Psal. xxxvii. 12.*

Defraud not one another in any matter. *1 Thess. iv. 6.*

For he that doth wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done, and there is no respect of persons. *Col. iii. 25.*

Render to all their dues. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another. *Rom. xiii. 7, 8.*

Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. *Mat. xviii. 26.*

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. *Mat. vi. 12.*

A servant was brought unto his Lord, who owed him ten thousand talents :
And

And forasmuch as he had not to pay, he desired forbearance. And the lord was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

But the same servant went out to his fellow-servant, which owed him an hundred pence: And he would grant him no forbearance, but laid hands on him, and cast him into prison till he should pay the debt.

Then his lord called him, and said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?

And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormenters, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. *Mat. xviii. 24, to 36.*

To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much. *Luk. vii. 47.*

HATH not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him? *Jam. ii. 5.*

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. *Mat. v. 3.*

I am instructed, both to be full, and to be hungry; both to abound, and to suffer need. *Phil. iv. 12.*

As having nothing, and yet possessing all things. *2 Cor. vi. 10.*

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be; world without end. Amen.

The Indebted Prisoner's Prayer for clearing the score of his Sins.

O Almighty and most righteous Lord, my worst debts are my sins, which are many and grievous, and which are all to be accounted for to thy justice. And * *who may abide, shouldst thou be extreme to mark what we do amiss?* Much less could I abide, who have done amiss extremely, and have [† brought not only the fear of thy future wrath, but my present restraint and sorrows upon mine own head, by my own evil doings.]

† *This when the Debts are contracted by our own faults, in luxury or mispence. But if through innocent misfortune, and mere hand of providence, instead of, brought not only, &c. say, [Deserved, not only to be made a prisoner for the same, in this uncomfortable place, but to be committed, among the lost angels, to chains of everlasting darkness, till the terrible judgment of the great day.]*

But, O gracious Lord, I am sensible of my wickedness, and am truly
C 4 contrite

contrite and sorry for my sins. And although this sense of my sin and folly comes too late to prevent this my uncomfortable restraint, and worldly misery: yet it is not too late to move thy pardoning mercy. O, for Christ's sake, strike off those scores, that they may neither sink

** In case of
Debts contracted
by mere hand of
providence, omit
this within the
books.*

my soul, nor terrify my conscience. [* Particularly, O gracious Father, strike off the score of all those sins, and expensive vices; and of all my unlawful, or unwise and self-willed projects; and of all my impoverishing neglects, or mismanagements; which have drawn all these streights and hardships upon myself, and have brought all this damage and trouble to my creditors.]

Cleanse me of all the guilt of these sins, good Lord, that my soul may not hereafter be made a prisoner, or arraigned again for the same at thy dreadful bar. And when once thou
hast

hast blotted out thine account against me, I shall the better bear to have mine earthly creditors exact theirs; and patiently endure their rigors, in hopes of thy free mercy and forgiveness, through the merits and satisfaction of my blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

A Prayer for mercy from his Creditors.

O Father of mercies, move the hearts of all, who have sent me hither, and who have it in their power to set me free, to have pity on me. Touch their humanity and good-nature, with a compassionate feeling of what I suffer. Let a sight of my necessity pierce their souls, and move their compassion; yea, moreover, make their consciences sensible, O Lord, how for their own souls sake, they are indispensibly obliged to shew charity towards such Debtors

Debtors, as are sincerely willing and desirous to pay them what they owe them, but cannot do it. Shew them that all sinners are Debtors; and that they are thy Debtors, as well as I am theirs; and that for infinitely greater sums than mine is. Yea, and that they are no more able to pay thee, O God, than I am to pay them.

O then, that their own necessity may make them wary, and prompt them to shew mercy. That they may *have patience with me*, till I can raise as much as I am able towards the discharge of their debt; and mercifully forgive the rest, when I can raise no more. O that they may not be rigorous in exacting the *hundred pence*, which I am not able to pay them; because then thou * declarest that thou likewise wilt exact the *many thousand talents*, which they are as unable to pay thee. And that thus, by mutually shewing mercy,

we

* Mat. xviii.
23, &c.

we may all be prepared to receive it at thy hands, for thy dear Son, our most blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ's sake. *Amen.*

Prayers for an heart to be honest to his Creditors.

O Almighty Lord, who lovest righteousness, but hatest iniquity; * let me not take up with a prison as an art of defrauding; nor choose to rest thus uncomfortably confined in mine own person, to leave the guilt and curse of ill-gotten goods, and of unpaid debts, to my family. Make me willing, O God, to do justice to all who are any way concerned with me, to the utmost of that worldly estate which I have to dispose of: and ready to give every man what I owe him, though I keep nothing to myself, but am left thereby to live upon thy good providence.

* Psal. xlv. 7.
and xi. 7.

If

If want must be my share, O let me want the conveniencies, or even the necessities of life, rather than the innocence thereof. And grant, good Lord, that the place of my wanting may be here in this world, where my wants will soon have an end; not hereafter in the next world, where they will know no end; for Jesus Christ's sake. *Amen.*

ENable me, O blessed Lord, if thou pleasest, by thy good providence, and put me again into a condition fully to discharge and clear my accounts with all my creditors. Let none of them, O my God, be losers in the end by me. But bless me in my ways, that I may have enough wherewithal to satisfy all their just demands, and give me an heart to pay it out accordingly, and that with thankfulness for their forbearance, and without unnecessary delays. And dispose them to have
patience

patience with me till this can be done. And suffer not me in the least to abuse that patience; but make me apply myself diligently, to raise it for them, as fast as I can, and honestly to pay it to them as fast as I can raise it for them.

But if I am not able to pay them all that I owe them, grant them the heart to forgive me what I cannot pay. And since what is thus given to me, is given *to the poor*; look upon it, O Lord, as * *lent* to thee, and be thou their

* Prov. xix.
17.

paymaster: As they very charitably consider my necessities, do thou carefully prevent theirs: and whatsoever they abate to me of my scores, do thou make up abundantly to them and theirs by thy good providence.

And after they have forgiven me, though I am no longer answerable to them in law; yet make me ever sensible, O God, that I still owe the same to them in equity. And give me

me always the heart to repay whatsoever they acquit, if ever thou shalt put me in a capacity, either by proper payments or by grateful offices, so to do. And by living always in this inward readiness and preparation of mind, to do them all exact justice, though I can never fully clear my debts, yet by thy grace I shall clear my conscience, and be fit not only for their charity, but also for thine eternal mercy, through the merits and mediation of my blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

A Thanksgiving for a Prisoner for Debt, on his release from prison.

O Father of Mercies, and God of all consolations, *the sighings of the Prisoners have come before thee,* * and thou hast graciously heard my prayer, and set my feet at liberty. To thee, O blessed Lord, do I owe this

* Psal. lxxix.

this comfortable freedom, which I have now obtained ; and to thy boundless and undeserved mercy, will I ever thankfully ascribe it. And, O that in all my life, and through the whole course of my conversation, I may ever remember that I am thy freeman. O that I may always adore and praise thy goodness for my deliverance ; and walk so humbly, and thankfully, and obediently towards thee, as may shew that I am never unmindful, that thou, gracious God, hast given me my liberty, and that I am ever to improve and spend it to thy glory, through Jesus Christ my Lord. *Amen.*

AND, Lord, let me never lose those good thoughts and purposes, nor forget those vows, which I made to thee when I was in trouble. Give me a mind suited in all things to my circumstances, and grace to deny my self, and to study to

to the utmost of my ability to do justice to all my creditors. Never suffer me to forget their kindness in my release, nor to give them any just cause to repent of it : nor do thou ever forget it, O merciful God, but remember it always for their good. Keep me thankfully sensible of all the kindness of my friends and neighbours, of all who did me any good offices, who shewed me countenance, or supplied my necessity, in the days of my adversity. O do thou make each of them that requital, which I ought to do ; and keep me always willing and ready to requite them, after the best manner I can ; and, when I am able to do no more, to pray earnestly to thee, that thou wouldst make up for me whatever returns of kindness I fall short in.

Remember also, I humbly intreat thee, O most merciful Father, all those poor prisoners, who are still under their uncomfortable restraints,
and

and in thy good time do the same for them, which in thy mercy thou hast now done for me. O that *having felt the same in myself*, * I may ever have a most *compassionate sense* and *tender feeling* of their afflictions, and may joyfully embrace all opportunities of recommending them to the pity of others, especially of those persons from whose charity they are to hope from their release : but above all, O blessed God, of recommending them to thine everlasting mercy ; which grant, that both they, and I, and all thy faithful people, may ever earnestly seek, and successfully find, for the sake of our only Saviour and Redeemer Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

* Heb. iv.
15.

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PRAYER.

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The Reverend Mr. *Prichard's*
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THOU Great Creator of this Earth,
That gav'st to every Seed its Birth;
By whom our Fields with Show'rs are blest,
Regard the HUSBANDMAN'S Request.

I'm going now to Till my Ground,
And scatter there my Seed around;
Which I no more expect to see,
Unless thy Blessing sow with me.

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In

In vain our Seed around we throw,
 In vain we Harrow where we Sow;
 Except Thou dost our Labours bless,
 And give the Grain a due Increase.

Not one of all my Barn-Supplies
 Will ever from the Ridges rise,
 Unless thy Blessing does pervade
 The bury'd Corn, and shoot the Blade.

Let then thy Blessing, Lord, attend
 On all the Labours of my Hand:
 That I with Joy may Reap and Mow
 A rich Return from what I sow.

Open the Windows of the Sky,
 And show'r down Plenty from on High:
 With Fat of Earth the Seed sustain,
 And raise a Spear from ev'ry Grain.

Let not our Sins thy Vengeance move,
 To turn our Heav'n to Brass above;
 Or harden into Ir'n our Earth,
 And o'er our Fields to spread a Dearth.

But pour in Season, on the Grain,
 The former and the latter Rain;
 And

And in Proportion due supply
The needful Change of Wet and Dry.

Forbid the Vermin to devour,
Forbid the Mildew's blasting Show'r,
Forbid the Tempest to destroy
My growing Crop, and promis'd Joy.

Crown with thy Goodness, Lord, the Year,
And let thy Blessings round appear;
Let Vales be cloath'd with Grass and Corn,
And Hills let various Flocks adorn.

Give to the Sons of Men their Bread;
Let Beasts with fatt'ning Grass be fed:
All Things in Plenty, Lord, provide;
That all our Wants may be supply'd.

Give us a Plenty, Lord, we pray,
From Fields of Corn, from Meads of Hay,
Of Fruits from Orchards grafted Stocks,
Of Milk from all the milky Flocks.

Thus, Lord, vouchsafe to bless our Land,
And ev'ry Work we take in Hand;
That so with lifted Hands we may
Return Thee Praises Night and Day.

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